



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://www.feedthefuture.gov/article/secretary-kerry-peace-corps-best-use-citizenship>

Secretary Kerry: Peace Corps "The Best Use of Citizenship"

Secretary of State John Kerry took a break from meetings last week at the Organization of American States General Assembly in Antigua, Guatemala, to swear in the first group of [Peace Corps](#) volunteers of his tenure.

During an intimate gathering before he addressed the staff of Embassy Guatemala City, the Secretary chatted with the incoming class of Guatemala Response volunteers.

One, Andrew Gall, was from Nashua, New Hampshire, just across the border from the Secretary's homestate of Massachusetts. The others were Carolyn Hartz Barrett of North Carolina, Jason Lucke of Kentucky, Deborah Reid of Texas, and Michael Wilcox of Ohio.

The group individually took the chance to share personal experiences from home with Secretary Kerry.

In turn, he hailed the importance and impact of Peace Corps volunteers in the field, saying they are the true face of the United States of America overseas.

"As a child of the 1960s, I'm a huge, huge fan of the Peace Corps," the Secretary said. "And so many of my friends along the way have been Peace Corps volunteers."

He cited his good friend Chris Dodd, who was a volunteer in the Dominican Republic before becoming a U.S. Senator. He also named former Senator Harris Wofford of Pennsylvania, who was instrumental in the formation of the Peace Corps.

The Secretary termed their service "the best use of citizenship" before he began to administer the oath to the new group of volunteers.

It wasn't without a moment of drama.

When Secretary Kerry concluded by saying, "...and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties in the Peace Corps, so help me, God," some volunteers struggled to remember the exact words of that lengthy passage.

As laughter erupted, the Secretary broke the passage into shorter phrases.

"I will well and faithfully discharge my duties," he said, before adding, "in the Peace Corps," and concluding, "so help me, God." The group followed along amid their laughs.

The Peace Corps Response program recruits professionals with significant technical expertise for short-term, high-impact assignments. The small group in the Secretary's inaugural swearing-in reflected the growing diversity of volunteers.

Each of the five has already completed two years of Peace Corps service in other Latin American countries. They arrived fluent in Spanish with the specific skills requested by the country of Guatemala, so they will be able to provide immediate assistance.

This is the first group of Response Volunteers to collaborate in the USAID and Peace Corps partnership to support food security in Guatemala, which started in September 2012.

This partnership supports the U.S. government's [Feed the Future](#) initiative, which aims to assist millions of vulnerable women, children, and family members – mostly small-scale farmers – to escape hunger and poverty.

Feed the Future also impacts significant numbers of children with highly effective nutrition interventions that prevent stunting and child mortality.

This first cohort of Response volunteers will support Save the Children and AGEXPORT; both implementing partners of the Feed the Future Initiative.

They will facilitate capacity building in monitoring and evaluation, nutrition, and agricultural production. They will also provide technical assistance and trainings as well as the development of manuals and implementation plans.

All will live and work in rural communities of the Western Guatemalan Highlands, among the people they serve.

The Peace Corps has a long history in Guatemala, starting in 1963 and with continued presence throughout the country's long and brutal civil war. More than 4,800 volunteers have served to date.

The currently active projects are aligned with the national priorities of the Ministries of Health and Education in contribution to the Pacto Hambre Cero (Zero Hunger Pact).

Volunteers support ministry systems through support in capacity building and behavior change communication in the areas of food security, maternal and child health, healthy schools, and youth in development.

This post originally [appeared](#) on the U.S. Department of State DipNote blog.